

State Commission

The North Dakota State Commission on National & Community Service, located in the Department of Commerce Workforce Development Division, provides opportunities for North Dakotans to engage in service that addresses the state and nation's educational, public safety, environmental, and other human needs. The Commission seeks to foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service. Aligned with the Corporation for National and Community Service's many initiatives, the North Dakota State Commission has also strategically combined faith-Based and community efforts in its commission membership and focus. The Commission manages a portfolio of six AmeriCorps State programs with more than 150 AmeriCorps members, addressing critical needs in the areas of education, health, and economic opportunity.

AmeriCorps State

West Fargo Public Schools Reading Corps has 41 AmeriCorps members. The program focuses on education with a concentration on literacy performance in Pre-K to 3rd grade. In the 2014-2015 program year, literacy interventions for students between the age of four and five increased between 28 and 37 percentage points from the fall to the spring. The AmeriCorps members increased the standard assessments of 484 students.

The Youthworks AmeriCorps program has 27 AmeriCorps members that provide mentoring, homework assistance, and outreach services to at-risk youth and young adults in Bismarck and Fargo. AmeriCorps members help improve the client's grades, social behavior, and access to community resources. A total of 326 at-risk youth were provided services and 37 at-risk youth received one-on-one mentoring, helping to improve their areas of need. Additionally, 29 at-risk youth participated in the program and were provided assistance with returning to school. Members made 3,646 street and school contacts with at-risk youth and young adults, providing them with materials regarding available services.

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Dakota Medical Foundation's mission is to measurably improve health and access to healthcare services, with a special emphasis on children in Cass County. The AmeriCorps VISTA project increases access to healthy food and physical activity among families experiencing poverty, increases school readiness among Head Start children, and builds capacity for nonprofits that improve access to healthcare, provide health-related services and improve the health conditions of low-income and underserved populations. VISTA activities include developing and implementing a physical activity curriculum for Head Start centers, partnering with food pantries to introduce healthy eating options to food baskets, writing grants, and building a fundraising system for organizations that seek to improve health conditions.

AmeriCorps NCCC

United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) is a family-focused, tribal community with 280 children living on campus. In 2002, the UTTC community envisioned a walking trail that would provide a safe environment for physical fitness and where traditional plants could be grown. In the summer of 2015, there was a large amount of overgrown plant material in the area, and an accumulation of debris that surrounded the trail, reducing visibility and allowing for an increased amount of illicit activity on the trail, such as fights, squatting, and substance abuse. An AmeriCorps NCCC team removed overgrowth and trash from one-third of a mile of the walking trail, removed approximately 85 yards of barbed wire fencing behind student housing, and beautified two gardens and the sweat lodge area. Much of the work involved pulling dead, downed limbs out of the woods to thin the brush and removing dead trees and bushes. In all, this project helped to create greater accessibility for recreational activities, increased options for healthy lifestyles for students, families, staff, visitors, and children, and provided a safe environment for the community.

In North Dakota, approximately 80 percent of the native prairie is gone. The Souris River Basin Complex represents a comprehensive collection of Drift and Coteau prairie, which can be considered an endangered resource and has potential for restoration of reasonably intact communities of native plants and animals. During the summer of 2015, an AmeriCorps NCCC team assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. The team removed old, dilapidated barbed wire fencing from the park and installed a new fence with gates for cattle to roam. Additionally, the team participated in three prescribed burns used to maintain, improve, and preserve habitat for wildlife, restore native prairie, and reduce hazardous fuels. Finally, the team scraped, sanded, and repainted a large observation deck. During the six week project, the team worked alongside park staff in an effort to help keep both the wildlife and the visitors to the park safe.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Black Hills Special Services Coop Foster Grandparent Program supported 69 Foster Grandparent volunteers who provided tutoring and assistance to 2,209 elementary and preschool students across 15 counties in western South Dakota. According to surveys completed by elementary classroom teachers, 90 percent of students who worked with Foster Grandparents showed improved literacy. Foster Grandparents focused on reading and literacy and helped beginning readers with basic skills such as the alphabet and phonics. Additionally, they served as an attentive, helpful audience to assist older readers with gaining more experience and understanding. Eighty-one percent of preschool students served by Foster Grandparents demonstrated gains in social and/or emotional development.

Senior Corps RSVP

National statistics indicate the homeless population has doubled over the past year in Rapid City. In response, the City of Rapid City RSVP program has provided food, shelter, and clothing to the homeless population through 45 volunteers serving 8,324 hours. RSVP volunteers helped provide more 58,000 meals, tutored or helped students with homework more than 13,000 times, and mentored children ages 6-18 years old on a daily basis. More than 630 individuals received independent living services, including 202 that received transportation services. In addition, 67 economically disadvantaged individuals received housing placement services; 314 people received free tax preparation and filing assistance; 1,841 veterans' family members received assistance including meals, companionship, and the distribution of information; and 201 RSVP volunteers leveraged \$232,700 dollars in cash resources for organizations or participants.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Lutheran Social Services Senior Companion program serves 29 counties in North and South Dakota. During the past year, 117 volunteers served 83,042 hours. In 2015, 619 older adult clients remained living independently and 24 family caregivers received respite services. Included in these numbers are 111 Bhutanese and Somali clients served by 11 New American volunteers and 75 Native American Indian clients served by 15 Native American Indian volunteers serving on five North Dakota Indian Reservations and Indian Service Areas. Volunteers help with light housekeeping, preparing light meals, and escorting clients to critical medical and other appointments. They also integrate clients into community services and encourage participation in social and recreational activities. Caregivers are provided weekly temporary breaks from their responsibilities while volunteers read, visit, or engage in familiar activities with the clients.